

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1873.

Subject: The Narrow Way; The Light Burden.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# THE NARROW WAY; THE LIGHT BURDEN.

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“Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. xi. 28-30.

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At the time that our Saviour was upon earth, the Jewish people had come to about the lowest condition into which, while they yet retained their national existence, they had ever fallen. If there was an irruption into any part of the East, you may be sure that the armies moved through Palestine. And whatever army moved through Palestine, what with the rapine and destruction, and what with the dregs that were left behind, the land was filled with bad men. The north of Galilee represented, in its population, something of almost every one of the Mediterranean nations; and the Gentiles and Jews were mixed together, much to the disgust of the Pharisaic Judæans, who were proud of the purity of their blood, and the unmixed character of their population.

Even in Judæa the Roman hand was heavy. Nor was the Roman soldier absent either from their dwellings or their temples. If they were not permitted to enter into the sacred courts, they overlooked everything, and dominated from the tower of Antonia down; and the whole land was swept by war as with a flame. Or, if it was a time of peace, it was continually like a volcano, that cannot rest; and insurrections broke out which were quenched with rivers of blood. So there was rocking to and fro; there was uneasiness; there was distress; there was poverty; there were grinding oppressions; there were exactions and extortions; there was everything that could make a proud people miserable.

It was in the midst of such a time as this that our Saviour came. No person looked at from the human side was more intensely in

sympathy with the Jewish history than our Master. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, taught in his youth in all the lore of the prophets and historians of Israel, and beloved of the people because he was so zealous a Jew. His heart bore witness to the suffering that was around about him. And wherever he went the roads were filled with people, because there was no contentment that kept them at home. As one in a fever turns from side to side, flushed with heat, and keeps turning, though a thousand turnings only teach him that there is no change of sensation that goes with change of place, so this fevered people, restless, unhappy, were at times sullen; and at other times they surged about our Master. We scarcely, reading the New Testament in our times, and under such circumstances of prosperity as we are accustomed to, can understand the condition of things which surrounded our Master when he was on earth.

Now, it was to such people as these that he said, "Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This declaration had an outward and an inward meaning. It had a literal meaning in respect to that unrest which came from the civic, social and ethical condition of the people; but it had a deeper meaning than that. It reached in to the source of all discontent. For, as by the power of an inward life and an inward faith, men can sustain poverty, and overthrow, and persecution, and grinding miseries, so by the same sustaining power men can deliver themselves from the domination, the exactions and the mischiefs, caused by their own fiery and insurrectionary passions. And while it had a historic application, it has also a spiritual application that runs through all time.

The utterance of Christ, "Take my yoke upon you," "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," seems strange as contrasted with other of his teachings. It is language of encouragement, and would seem to imply that it is not difficult for one to be, and to rejoice in being, a Christian; and yet it is from the same lips that come the utterance, "Strive to enter," "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here seems to be a two-voiced and antagonizing utterance. Try, for it is *hard*: try, for it is *easy*. *Strive: Come*. The way is *narrow*; the way is *strait*. My yoke is *easy*; my burden is *light*. Is it true that a thing can be both hard and easy at the same time? What is the enigma? What is the mystery? Surely both things are true. Both things, too, are perfectly explainable—and that, not by any remote or metaphysical reasoning, but by the simplest and most straightforward statements.

Let us look at an inventory of what it means to be a Christian.



What are the qualities and states of mind with which one must be endued in order to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We have an inventory of the fruits which are wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Let us ask ourselves whether, if we were possessed and dominated by those fruits, it would really be a burden and a hardship? Suppose that each of the qualities which are mentioned as fruits of the Spirit were made into a yoke, and you were obliged to wear it? Or, if you think of the wain or the cart behind the oxen, and loaded, suppose these were the load which you were drawing as a burden, would that load be heavy? The fruits of the Spirit, are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Not that these are all, but they are enough. When a man goes into a garden to make a bouquet, he cannot carry all the flowers that are there, nor flowers of all the kinds: he can carry only so many as he can handle. And when the fruits of the Spirit are enumerated, the sum total of human experience cannot be given: therefore the more salient points only are given.

Now, suppose a man had a yoke made and put upon him which he must needs wear, and suppose his spirit life were as perfectly under the dominion of love as a horse that is harnessed is under the dominion and restraint of the harness, or as a steer that is yoked is under the control of the yoke, would the yoke be a hard or an easy one? Not-loving is hard, and wrong-loving is hard; but is loving in its higher and truer and nobler sense a hard yoke? Is it hard for a mother to love? Is it hard for a father? Is it hard for a friend? Is that a hard life in which love is so supreme, so dictatorial, that it sways everything else to its will? "Take my yoke upon you." *Love* is one yoke which a man must take who is a Christian.

Another element that is mentioned is *joy*. The whole world is running after it. The mistake of men is, not that they want joy, but that they are unwise as to the kind of joy that they shall have. All men are seeking for joy, and if they would seek that joy which shall ally them to the spiritual, the eternal and the divine; if they would seek joy according to the will of God, as one of the fruits of the Spirit in the human soul; that is to say, if the Sun of righteousness shone on the hearts of men, and brought forth joy which hung in clusters as the fruit of divine inspiration, would that be a hard yoke to bear?

Many people think that to be a Christian means being a kind of half-way man. Many people think that to be a Christian means submission to restraints, wearing chains and shackles. Many people think that to be a Christian means being long-faced, having

a solemn countenance, just as a mask for caprices and fantasies. Many people think that to be a Christian means being squalid and lean—destitute of those richer qualities with which men are endowed. But the Spirit of God produces joy as well as love, and under its influence the soul sparkles. As the sea sparkles when on its ripples falls the sun, so that every single motion glances fire and light, so the soul, under the beneficent influence of the Divine Spirit, is radiant, or may be, with joy. If that be a yoke, who would ever object to wearing it? And yet it is a part of that to which we come if we adhere to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next we have *peace*. Ah! there is something higher, more joyful than joy. It is peace. That is the equilibrium of the whole soul and nature under the excitement which is common to every heart. By it the whole soul is lifted out of the agitations and disturbances of the lower experience. There is a realm where men are filled with radiancy and sweetness and content, and that is the realm of peace. And is peace oppressive? Is that tranquil, luminous satisfaction in every part of one's nature, which makes him as sweetly content as a bed of flowers when the dew lies upon it in the morning, and the sun shines and strikes through every drop of the dew and causes it to reflect the thousand colors of the Orient—is that burdensome and oppressive? If peace be a yoke, how downy, how plushy, how soft to the shoulders must it be!

Then there is *long-suffering*. Oh, how naturally we cry out, as a chestnut stick that burns, and can never keep still, but expresses its discontent with perpetual snappings! How do men carry themselves in life fretted by annoyances and troubles! And yet, there is such a thing as carrying one's self so that there shall be hardly any troubles and annoyances. Men have, in life, ten thousand conflicts, and disappointments, and gashings; and, ordinarily, they receive these things in such a way, and have excited in them such impetuosity and irritation, that they throw sparks every whither; but one who has long-suffering, or the faculty of enduring a great while, is endowed with such a sense of patience and quiet and content, that his surrounding, his outward condition, his circumstances in life, do not vex and harass him. Men are ashamed to cry when they are hurt a little; but when the pain lasts, when annoyances continue, then men are apt to grow weary. It is no small thing to be possessed of the trait which enables one to bear without complaining, not momentary pains, but long irritations. It is a great thing to have a spirit of long-suffering which shall give one the power to suffer without losing joy, without losing peace, without losing love. It is a blessed state to which you have



arrived when you can subordinate all the things that beat upon you, so that you shall think no more about them than the old solid, stone-built castle thinks of the rattling hail in summer, or the driving snow in winter, that beats upon it. What the castle is, where there is light within, where there is fire on the hearth, where all is joy, while the winter scowls and beats and flails the outside, that may be said to be the soul of a man who is built so high and with such thick and secure walls that external things can afflict him but little. *Long-suffering*—what a glorious attribute it is to us! What an armor it is! Is a man in bondage who has learned that? Yet it is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and it is a part of being a Christian. Oh, that we might all of us have more of these yokes, more of these burdens; for they are yokes and burdens that give more strength than they take!

But this is not all. There is *gentleness*, also. Feebleness is usually gentle. Persons of a negative temperament, persons whose nature is rather torpid, persons who have no special force, are almost always gentle. They are soft. But softness is not the gentleness which the Spirit breeds: it is the weakness which the flesh breeds. The gentleness of the Divine Spirit working in men is such an influencing of vigor, of strength, of power, that they express themselves with sweetness: There is no gentleness in the world like that which is manifested by power. To see a strong, giant-built man meet in the way a little child, and raise it up, and say to it, "Bless you, my darling"; to see his great, coarse hands, and his arms that are like bears' paws, go down, and, accompanying the act with some sweet words, lift the child to his bosom—that is a most beautiful sight. There never was a breastpin in a man's bosom to be compared with a sweet little child. To see a slender, pale-faced woman and mother take up a child is beautiful; we expect that; but to see a great, brawny man take up a child, with tenderness and gentleness, is beautiful indeed. Everybody marvels at that.

"A little child shall lead them."

Nothing is so sweet as the softness and gentleness of power. A man that has a gigantic intellect; a man that can control battalions and armies in the field; a man that has courage, and will, and determination; a man that has a lordly pride, and knows his strength, and moves among men with power—such a man, who is subdued by the influence of the dear Spirit of God, and who has such sweetness and gentleness that he treats all men with lenity, and kindness, and forbearance, and patience, has what is here meant by *gentleness*. And is that a bad thing to have? Is it a hard

yoke? Is it not an easy one? Is it a heavy burden? Was there ever a burden that was so light and joyous?

But that is not all. There is *goodness*. I was going to say, when I saw the first one, that the best thing in the world was love; but when I saw joy, I thought that was the best; and when I saw peace, I thought that was better than either of them; and when I saw long-suffering, I thought that, in many respects, was the best; and when I saw gentleness, that seemed the best; and now comes goodness, and that seems the best. They are all the best. The one that you look at last is the best. That fullness of soul, that kindness, that consideration which leads a man perpetually to rain satisfaction and happiness upon all around about him, not thinking of his own things, not studying his own welfare, forgetful of himself, and being a fountain out of which all the time flow streams of delight for others—that is goodness. There is a great difference between a man who is simply a right-minded, rigorously *just* man, and a thoroughly *good* man. There are a great many men in this world who are just, but who are raw-boned, who are very hard; and we hate to dash against them. There are a great many men who are cold and just. There are a great many men who are severe and just. There are a great many men who are selfish and just. We have a saying on this subject:

“Scarcely for a *righteous* [just] man will one die; yet peradventure for a *good* man some would even dare to die.”

There is now and then a man whose goodness is such that there is universal sympathy for him, and that others would stand up for him in times of danger, even though they should lose their lives in doing it; but men are not apt to be willing to lay down their lives for one who is merely just. Justice is very good, but that alone is like a heap of bones with nothing on them. Goodness is like the flesh by which bones are covered over. You want justice and integrity, but you want them clothed with goodness, with kindness, with gentleness.

But even that is not all. There is *faith*. Do you ever see men that are just moral, and only moral. They are thrifty; their barns overflow with abundance; their households are patterns of propriety; as citizens, they are law-abiding; they are public-spirited; they are kind; and they are very good in their way. But after all, their economy lies inside of the horizon of time; and when you talk to them of domestic affairs, and the public weal, and the interests of the commonwealth, and the events of history, they are interested, but their thoughts go no farther.

Oh, what would this world be if you were to strike a line



through the air as high as a man's head, and take off the top? There would be no atmosphere above; there would be no shining of the sun, moon, and stars; there would be no heavens. A man may be just and good and moral; but if he has no sense of the infinite, no sense of the reach of things beyond the sight, in the spirit realm, he lacks that which is more to be desired than any of these other things—namely, faith. By *faith* is meant, comprehensively, a recognition of those things which are above the senses—the great supersensuous realm which includes divine existence, the heavenly state, the sphere of angelic life, where dwell the spirits of just men made perfect.

Now is a man who has this condition of soul which I have described, a poor, burdened, over-harnessed creature? Take these qualities, and all the others (for I will not dilate any farther on them); and I ask, would it be an oppression to be obliged to wear them? If you had them, they would not trouble you, would they? Would you not be glad if you had them? Ah! the very thing is the getting them. The danger comes in on the other side.

A boy says, "Oh, that I could only calculate an eclipse! Oh, that I knew as much as Professor Airy, of the Royal Observatory, and could see all that is going on in the heavens! Oh, that I could take a glass and penetrate the secrets which are concealed in the hiding places of the universe!" He can do these things; but not immediately, nor without work. He has not got to the rule of three yet. He must go through arithmetic, through algebra, through geometry, and into the higher mathematics, before he can do it; but he can work up to it.

Ah! what a magnificent range, what a liberty, a mathematician has who has possession of his science! and how hard it is for a man to be a thorough-paced mathematician! It is hard, and it is easy. It is easy when he has got to it, but it is hard while he is getting to it.

Says a man, starting in life, "Riches are a good thing. I should like to be rich." But do you like getting riches? Do you like getting up early, and going to bed late, and studying and working all the while between? There are hundreds of men in the community who would rejoice to be rich, but who will not pay the price for riches. The forethought, the diligence, the severe industry, the self-denial, the painstaking and the painbearing, necessary to the acquiring of riches, they are not willing to give. It may be a blessed thing for them to be rich, and yet it is not a blessed thing for them to get riches; and so they go without them. Or, if they get money, they do not keep it.

There are many more who believe it would be a noble thing to be universally respected and beloved; but the qualities which command universal respect and love are not easy to be had. They imply education—the broadest and most continuous education. If you teach a young man self-respect, and reverence, and methodical living, and self-restraint, and self-denial in its higher and broader sphere, the process seems hard by which you do it; and yet it is the discipline of such processes that brings men to their royal liberties. The way to these liberties seems to them cut in the rocks; and it is, so to speak.

Miners like gold when they have got it, but not while they are getting it. The digging and crushing the quartz for gold is hard work. The way to all things that are worth having in this world is up-hill. The road is strait and narrow to everything that lifts men above the animal. All things that are lofty and noble come by hard work—by that education which implies intense self-application and self-denial.

Look at it a little more closely. Consider the force of men's passions—their pride; their selfishness; their combativeness; their lower propensities generally. That part of human nature which dwells in selfishness, and spontaneously tends toward self-indulgence, is strong in mankind. It may be relatively weak in some, but in the mass of men it is strong. The bottom of the brain, as a rule, is far stronger and more fruitful in our race, than the top. That part of a man's economy which allies him to the flesh, and to matter, and to time, has ascendancy from the beginning of life; and he has to grow toward refinement and culture, as well as toward piety.

We are said to be *totally depraved*. I never use that phrase except to abuse it. It is a misleading phrase. But it is true that man is an animal when he is born. He is of the earth earthy. His first impulses, his instincts before his nature begins to develop, are those which connect him with this world, with things physical, and with the animal creation. Men are born low down, unspiritual. This great truth cannot be denied.

Gradually men escape from the dominion of their lower faculties; and if they submit themselves to the higher elements of human life, to the well regulated economy of society, and to the great material laws of creation, the effect is to inspire in them thrift, and refinement, and elevation, and finally virtue and true piety.

The structure of this life favors, in many respects, the development of the higher manhood; so that men run with the laws of



nature when they run toward virtue and toward God; but, after all, as the world is, as human society is, with its great biasing influences, when men throw themselves into the currents of human life, they tend to strengthen their animal nature. For the most part, human society represses the nobler qualities of men. If you look at the influences of society as they ordinarily act upon men's selfishness, upon their self-seeking, upon their self-indulgence, upon their overbearing spirit, upon their desire for that honor which comes from men rather than for that which comes from God, you will find that the effect is not to diminish, but to increase the power of these baser elements of their being. Not the best, but the worst parts of men are mainly brought into activity by their surroundings in this world. When, therefore, a man attempts to bring his higher nature into the ascendancy, he finds himself under the dominion of his lower nature, and it is hard for him to rise.

Now, if one is to come to the spirit of love, or joy, or peace, or long-suffering, or meekness, or gentleness, or goodness, or temperance, out of his natural state, in spite of the biasing influences and discouraging hindrances which surround him in society, as it is at present organized, of course his own will must be brought to bear; but not once in a thousand times have men wills which are competent to the task.

There is not a child, I suppose, that cannot educate himself, in the common acceptance of that term. Education is not a thing that a person pours into a boy. All that his teacher can do is to stir up what there is in him. If he has any education at all, he educates himself. Some people think that education is like medicine, which you can take according to this school or that school, from this doctor or that doctor; but if a man is cured, that which effects the cure is inside of himself. The doctor may persuade him to make efforts to get well; he may give him proper remedies which shall wake up the energies that are dormant in him, and which shall produce a condition by which the life-forces shall be set right, so that they can work; but no doctor goes and takes a man's disease in his hand, and walks off with it, and throws it away. If any man gets rid of morbid influences through the instrumentality of a doctor, it is because the doctor stirs him up to cast them out. If a man overcomes the diseased state of his system, it is because stimulants are brought to bear upon him, which wake up the lazy servants in his body, and say to them, "Clean out! Clean out! Clean out!"

And so it is in the great realm of moral reconstruction, moral education, moral development. Men themselves have to work.

But can they do it alone? Abstractly we may say that they can; but concretely, as a matter of fact, they cannot. They *will not*, that is—for that is usually the meaning of *cannot*. Men left to themselves never, by the power of their own reason, by their own moral forces, by their might in any form, undertake to develop their higher and nobler manhood.

Here is a man working on a farm. He is a good honest fellow. He is strongly built. But he is without much culture. He is destitute of aspiration. He indulges and rejoices in rude, coarse sports. But by-and-by he chances to be in a household where refinement dwells; and there his eye falls on one that to him seems angelic. Angels visit us all, first or last, for a little while, at least. Toward that one his affections begin to go out. And what a change comes over him. The vulgar oath which he used to fling about with so little thought he never utters now. Once he cared not how he looked; he thought that an honest man looked well enough in coarse clothes, and he was rather proud of them than otherwise; but a new life has been awakened in him, and he begins to be a little ashamed of his old clothes, and he wishes he had a good suit. Heretofore he has not cared for flowers, but he has learned that they mean something, and he begins to find beauty in them. Who ever thought of there being poetry in such an unhewn log as that? And yet, as sure as you live, he is sitting down and trying to write poetry! What is the matter? He is doing it of his own will. Moreover, he begins to take to music. He would give anything if he could sing. He is endeavoring to cultivate himself in various ways. Oh, that men could be kept courting all the days of their life! What a school the school of love is! How, when men feel the real divine fire, does it touch all that is noble, all that is fine, all that is aspiring, all that is graceful, and all that is beautiful in them! True love inspires the highest elements of the soul. Never was a man, unaided, competent to develop these things; but once let the light of love fall on his soul, and you will see how it will help him. Things that he derided, or cared nothing for, or regarded as of little or no consequence, he now looks upon as important, and worth striving for. He is conscious of his ignorance, and wants to learn. He knows what he lacks, and wants to supply it.

Now, let a man look upon the whole of life so, let him be brought to admire and long for all that grace and dignity and nobility and manhood which is possible to us, and which is enjoined upon us, and what a change will come over him! How, in our natural and lower state, do we disdain the higher manhood, and



pass it by, and count it as nothing compared with worldly thrift but once let the thought of Christ fall upon us, as the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, and how in a moment does the divine love begin to stimulate everything that is wisest and purest and noblest and best in us! The rude man, inspired by this love, seeks by the power of his will and for the sake of Christ to polish, to refine, and to ennoble his nature. The lion-like rage in a man—how is it subdued by this yoke! The tough, enduring power, the sullen strength, which nothing else can overcome—how does it give way before this single element! How does one faculty after another come into subjection to it! How do the finer qualities begin to show themselves where it resides! How does the divine love bring out of the wintry heart as many things as the sun is bringing out of our long winter-locked earth!

“Come unto me,” says the voice of Christ. “And what will you give me?” “I will give you faith; I will inspire you with love; I will fill you with peace; I will cause you to overflow with joy; I will teach you temperance; I will instruct you in self-restraint; I will show you how to deny the ear, the eye, and the other senses; I will help you to live a noble life. Take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

My brethren, is not this so? Oh, if there was that enduring power of the Spirit resting upon you, lifting you up above the elements of the flesh, and above all the bondage of circumstances; if your life lay in the higher spheres; if you dwelt in the consciousness of the divine presence, of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, do not you believe this would be an easier and better life?

And now, in respect to this, let me say that they who would begin a Christian life will find out, so far as externals are concerned, that it is easier to go for the whole than for any single part. When a man has been living in a wicked worldly way, indulging in unlawful pleasures, stained with vices here and there, he cannot break away from one of them and go on with the rest. Sometimes men propose to leave off a few of their indulgences. For instance, a man says, “I won’t swear any more;” or, “I won’t break Sunday any more;” or, “I won’t drink any more;” or, “I won’t go with bad company any more.” Let me tell you that men cannot leave off a few of their vices half so easily as they can leave off the whole of them. It is better for a man whose garments are defiled to take off the whole suit, and put on another, than to undertake to clean spot by spot with the garments on him. It is possible for a man to form a purpose so high as to make it easy for

him to reform completely; but if he aims at only a partial reform, it will be hard for him, no matter what his purpose may be.

If a man is living as a thief and robber, a gambler—for a gambler is a thief and a robber; or if a man is living subject to habits of intoxication, it is better for him to cleanse himself, once and for all, by the consecration of his heart to God, than to undertake to cleanse himself piecemeal. The power of the Holy Ghost will set men free from sins and tangling alliances sooner than he can set himself free from them by cutting off one after another. Some men think that if they come gradually out of sins they will be more likely to escape from those evils which come from sudden and radical changes. Yes, but if a man is in a house that is on fire, and is on the fifth story, and he refuses to be taken out suddenly because he wants to be cooled off gradually, by being taken from the room where he is to another that is not so hot, and to another that is still less hot, there will not be much left of him to bury when he gets out! It is not safe to take a man out gradually from the midst of a conflagration. It is better even to throw him out of a window, and let him take his chances of not being dashed to pieces. And if a man is addicted to vices in life, it is not necessary nor safe for him to go through a long course in getting rid of them.

Now, by the power of his will, helped by God to keep his purpose, a man can peremptorily, to-night, in this presence, come to this sacred resolution: "From this time forth I forswear all the evil that I am conscious of in my overt life; I bid farewell to it; I will steal no more; I will lie no more; I will swear no more; I will drink no more; I will give way to lust no more. By the grace of God I am bound for heaven." There is scarcely any more effort required to throw off the whole of a man's vices than to throw off any one of them. If a man is endued with the grace of the Spirit, it is as easy for him to aim at overcoming the whole of his sins, as to aim at the overcoming of one of them. He who has that faith which works by love is allied to the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that he can undertake the fullest reformation with a strong prospect of success. All who have it are brooded under the same wing. To him who has it all other things shall be added.

For after all, the wisest step for men to take in respect to repentance of sin is to forsake all their transgressions, to aim at the highest morality, and not at anything short of it. If you cannot get anything else, take lower morality; but oh! you were born for something more than that. You were born for the sonship of God. You were born to bring forth all the fruits



of the Spirit. For you is the exaltation of joy. For you is the serenity of peace. For you is that love of God which passeth all understanding. For you is honor and glory and immortality. Aim at these things, and be content with nothing less than these things; for he that aims at that which is highest, includes all that is lowest, and all that is between them.

Are there any of you who have been thinking that before you died you would attempt to be religious? Do not think that religion is something that you can put on or off as a garment. Religion is a state of the soul. The kingdom of God is within you. Have you thought that sometime you would put it to proof? Why not do it now? Are you not old enough? Have you not sinned long enough? Have you not trodden under foot your own manhood long enough? Have you not lived with conscious imperfection long enough? Is not your conscience enough goaded and burdened by setting aside the commands of Him who loved you, and gave himself for you? Is there no power in the nobility of love and faith and hope? Will you not do the thing which you ought to do from the highest motives? Then do it, at least, from a sense of what is becoming. But is not pride in its higher forms strong in you? Then do it from the next lower motive—from self-interest; for “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Will you not do it from that motive? Then do it from fear; for the wrath of God is revealed against all that work iniquity. Though they may have temporary peace, they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the righteous retribution will at last overtake them. Do it from the lowest considerations, rather than from none; but I beseech of you, do it from the noblest considerations. I beseech of you by the love of God, I beseech of you by your sense of gratitude, I beseech of you by your aspiration or hope, turn from evil, and enter upon that faith wherein you will find that every burden of life is light, and that its every yoke is easy.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice that we may draw near to thee, though we cannot see thee with bodily sight. Thou great, invisible, but ever-present One, we rejoice that we may, by our souls, take hold upon thee. We rejoice that we may feel thy presence enlightening our understanding, and comforting our hearts. We rejoice that through faith thou art leading us away from self toward thee, and toward that higher life in which thou dost dwell. We rejoice that thou hast made it to be no more a matter of doubt whether thou hearest prayer. We have felt the sacred dew descending upon us. We have known where to carry our grief and our sorrow. We have felt the burden roll from our shoulders. Grace hath repaired the waste, when we were in despondency, and weakness, and want, so that we have renewed our strength as the eagles, and have been unwearied in all the way wherein we were called to walk. Thou, O God, by thine own life, dost give life to all things that are. Thou dost nourish all those to whom thou hast brought faith. Thou dost watch over the human family with a Father's eye. Thou hast looked upon us divinely, but with wisdom and mystery. We cannot understand the way of life; but we believe that eternal goodness presides over all things, and that justice and truth shall be apparent in thine administration; and that when we rise so as to understand, in thy presence, the new revelation of the way of God among men and upon earth, we shall join with those who claim that thou art worthy to be crowned, and to receive dominion, and honor, and glory, and power, forever and forever.

And now, we pray that we may hold fast to the blessedness of this faith. May we trust in thy invisible goodness, and love, and power, and wisdom, in the divine providence which overhangs all things, and pervades all things. And every day, in the midst of care, and fear, and sorrow, and trouble, and under burdens, bearing the cross, still may we find our strength in God. Yea, and in our own sweet delight may we rejoice in the Lord. May our strength, our wisdom, and all our goodness be of thine inspiration. And so may we be led in the way of this life that thou shalt see that we are preparing for that higher life which is beyond.

We commend to thee all those who are gathered into thy presence according to their necessity. Who shall read, who shall utter that which they suffer, and which they cannot frame into words, but thou? Thou dost behold as an open book the heart of every one. Thou knowest men's secret sorrows, their ailments; their troubles; their history. Things connected with their experience which they themselves do not know are open before thee.

Grant to every one, to-night, blessings, not according to his knowledge, nor according to the worthiness of his asking, but according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

We pray especially for all that may be under the cloud of bereavement; for all to whom the way of life may seem closed; for all across whose path lie obstacles which appear insurmountable. We pray for all those who are discouraged and disappointed. We pray for all those who walk heavily burdened. We pray for all those who are suffering in poverty, and know not which way to turn. We pray for all those who are suffering with infirmities and ailments which well-nigh take away the marrow of their life. We pray for all those who are waiting wearily for loved ones that are afar off and do not come, and whose hearts are sick from hope deferred. We pray for all those who, in their households and in their affairs, are bearing burdens which seem too heavy for them. We pray for all that suffer from the harassments and canker of care. We pray for all that are in any way heavily laden. May they hear thy voice calling to them, and saying, "Come



unto me;" and may they know the secret of access to Christ, and so of gaining peace and joyfulness even in sorrow. For thy servants of old learned how to bear all human trouble, and yet to rise above it, and to sing. Thou didst teach thine early disciples how to be as the offscouring of the earth, and yet to rejoice without cessation. Hast thou forgotten thy love? Art thou not still the God and Father of men? Art not thou a Saviour and present help in time of trouble? Wilt thou not draw near to all who are afflicted and oppressed, and succor them, that they may rejoice and put their trust in thee, and bear witness to others that it is not a vain thing to lean upon the Lord?

We pray for all those who are strong in the midst of prosperity, that they may not become self-indulgent; that they may not have overweening pride in their own strength, and skill, and knowledge. We pray for all those whom thou hast increased in worldly things. May they remember that they have received freely; and freely may they give. May they hold all the resources of power which have been committed to them in trust as stewards. We pray, not only that they may be strong for themselves, but that they may be strong for the world.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all that are standing upon the farther verge of life. May their last years not be dark, nor even in the twilight: may they, rather, glow as the hours of the setting sun with mellow light. And we pray that thou wilt prepare them for that rest which is just before them. So fill their hearts with the thought of God's guidance and grace that their testimony shall magnify, in the life of all that are around about them, the goodness and graciousness of their God.

We commend to thee all the little ones—the children—that are in this great congregation; and all the families to which they belong; and all the schools in which they are instructed. And we pray for all those who are teaching in our Bible-classes, and Sabbath-schools, and missions. May they be strengthened and inspired by thee. And may their work not be poorly done, nor done in vain. Let them work on; and may they see, O Lord, that that which they sow with painstaking, and it may be with tears, is bringing forth fruit; and soon may they come back with their bosom filled with sheaves.

We pray for all the churches of God, however they may differ from each other. Lord, fill them with thy Spirit; and if they may not unite in outward forms, may they be inwardly one in faith, and love, and devotion, and consecration to God. Oh! when shall the time come that that which is sacred shall be stronger upon the earth than that which is base? When shall kindness be more strengthened than selfishness? When shall men most easily unite in the bonds of love, as hitherto they have most easily united in the bonds of hatred? When shall it be in the power of true faith to bring nations together so that they shall hurt each other no more, and defile the earth with blood no longer? O Lord our God, thou hast promised this latter-day glory. We believe that thou wilt, in thine own time, bring it to pass. Oh! make haste, for the earth doth wait for thee, sighing, and groaning, and travelling in pain.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt everywhere overturn and overturn until He whose right it is shall come and reign.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, evermore.  
*Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant that the truth from out of thy Word may interpret itself to the consciousness of those who have heard it. We pray that thou wilt inspire in every one the desire for that manliness which is of God. May we never forget our birthright. We are the sons of God, fallen, as we seem to be, and are. Oh! arouse in every one of us, we beseech of thee, a sense of our necessity, of the deep sinfulness of life, and of our need of divine help. And while we are ourselves made willing in the day of thy power, and are workers together with God, be thou present, O Lord, to work in us to will and to do thy good pleasure. We look to thee. Yea, why should we beseech thee, since thou art outshining or moving upon the hearts of men, persuading them? Grant that the persuasions of thy Spirit may not be unheeded. May one, and another, and another turn from evil to good, and from good to higher good. And may thy name be glorified, and may we, as thy children, be glorified with thee, in the advancement of thy cause and kingdom among men. We ask it for Christ Jesus' sake. *Amen.*



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